

Landowner _____

**WHAT IS MULCHING?**

Mulching is applying plant residues, by-products, or other suitable materials produced offsite, to the land surface.

PURPOSE

- Conserve soil moisture
- Moderate soil temperature
- Provide erosion control
- Suppress weed growth
- Establish vegetative cover
- Improve soil condition and increase soil fertility

HOW IT HELPS THE LAND

Mulches applied to the land protect plants and improve soil resources. Organic mulches can be incorporated into the soil at the end of a growing season and provide an excellent source of organic material. Mulches also provide protective temporary cover to control erosion during the establishment of grass or other permanent cover.

WHERE THE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice can be applied on any lands where mulches are needed.

WHERE TO GET HELP

For assistance with mulching, contact your local Natural Resource Conservation Service or your local Conservation District office.

APPLYING THE PRACTICE

There are two types of mulches:

- Organic
 - Hay and straw, wood chips, bark, or shavings, pine needles and leaves
- Inorganic
 - Plastic, landscape fabric, pea size gravel

The selection of a mulching material will depend primarily on the purpose for the material, site conditions and availability of the mulch.

Mulching is generally performed after the land is shaped or graded, surface prepared, and seedlings or plantings completed. There may be instances in which the mulch needs to be applied prior to seeding or planting to provide erosion control.

The mulch material needs to be applied as evenly to the soil surface as possible. When slopes are steep and water can remove the mulch material, anchoring

may be needed to hold the mulch in place. This can be accomplished using tackifiers, emulsions, pinning, netting, or light tillage depending on the mulch material.

Some mulch materials may not allow good air movement or water penetration causing the soil to remain very wet and very cool. Mulching with these materials may need to be delayed when these conditions exist.

Some organic mulch like hay, straw, lawn clippings, or manure may contain viable seed or pathogens and may need to be composted or dried before application.

When establishing grass, hay mulches of native prairie grass, weeping lovegrass, yellow bluestems, tall fescue, and sorghum shall be used on sites where the area will not have a permanent cover of vegetation for at least 6 months. Straw from small grains may be used on sites that need protection for 3 months or less.

These hay mulches are applied at a rate of 2.5 ton/ac (1 lb/sq.yd.). They are generally applied after seeding is completed.

Mulch materials used to increase soil fertility need to have a carbon to nitrogen (C:N) ratio of less than 30:1 so that decomposition can occur quickly without

additional nitrogen. Generally, animal manure or legume hays will provide this ratio.

CONSIDERATIONS

Deep mulch provides nesting habitat for ground-burrowing rodents that can chew on the bark of tree trunks and/or tree roots. Light mulch applied after the first cold weather may prevent rodents from nesting.

Some mulch materials like straw, lawn clippings, wood shavings, and fabric weed barrier can be a potential fire hazard. This needs to be considered in the placement and use of mulches around builds or structures.

MAINTAINING THE PRACTICE

The mulch area needs to be checked regularly and especially after heavy rains for damage or removal of the mulch. Damages should be repaired as soon as possible.

Protect the area from heavy traffic after placement.

The mulch material may need to be removed, incorporated, or replenished depending on the intended purpose.

Mulching – Specifications Sheet

Purpose (Check all that apply)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Conserve soil moisture	<input type="checkbox"/> Suppress weed growth
<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate soil temperature	<input type="checkbox"/> Establish vegetative cover
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide erosion control	<input type="checkbox"/> Improve soil condition and increase soil fertility

Location and Layout (Describe using field nos., legal, or locations in the field)

Application of Mulch Material					
Field no.	1	2	3	4	All Fields
Mulch material					
Distribution method					
Anchoring method if needed					
Rate of application or thickness of the mulch					
Timing of mulch application					
Additional Management for Mulch Material:					

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